

House—I guess the White House Counsel, but who the heck knows; it is hard to tell who is in charge over there—is blocking this.

So, again, give my office a call at (202) 224-1026. I am ready to meet and talk to you anytime before the vote. Don't worry—I don't think President Biden is going to yank your nomination if you call me. Heck, he probably doesn't even know this is going on. But you know this is the right thing to do, Judges. You have read the Constitution. Heck, if our meeting goes well, I might even vote for you.

But here is the thing: You will learn more about the issues that you are going to have to deal with very soon in your tenure that you probably don't know anything about—no offense to you. I have read your backgrounds. You don't know anything about Native Alaskan law. You don't know anything about ANILCA. You probably have very different views than I and my constituents do on the Second Amendment. But you need to hear these issues because you are going to be life-tenured on the Ninth Circuit, and you don't have time to talk to me, a U.S. Senator, who is a Senator representing a State from the Ninth Circuit? You know it is wrong.

By the way, my colleagues in the Senate know it is wrong. So I hope my Democratic and Republican colleagues realize that this is not a good precedent. This is not a good precedent. It has never happened as long as I have been here.

You know, from big things to small things, this administration has really focused in many ways on smashing political and institutional norms that have enjoyed strong bipartisan support. It is not good for this body, and it is not good for the government.

The Wall Street Journal, today, had an article about Biden's Federal regulators staging a coup against the Director of the FDIC on bank mergers. One of these regulators doesn't even have the power over bank mergers, and now he is trying to be in charge.

I serve on the U.S. Naval Academy's Board of Visitors. It is a huge honor. The President comes in, President Biden, and fires everybody on the service academies who was appointed by President Trump. Nobody has ever done that before—no President. Everybody on the Board of Visitors of the Naval Academy is furious—the Democrats, the Republicans. The No. 1 thing they are saying is, this President is the first one to politicize the service academies. Then, oh, by the way, he hasn't appointed anyone yet to replace the people he fired, so we didn't have a quorum for our meeting last week.

He is just smashing institutional norms. Yet this institutional norm of advice and consent, when it comes to circuit court judges with life tenure, is something that we have all agreed upon. The previous administration certainly allowed for it. Yet, right now, I can't meet with Ninth Circuit judges

who are going to have enormous power for their entire lives over my constituents.

So, to my colleagues, we shouldn't allow this. You guys know it is wrong.

To the judges—like I said, Judge Sanchez, Judge Koh, Judge Sung, Judge Thomas—give my office a call. Do the right thing. Your first test of judicial independence is before you of the Senate. The U.S. Senate—of the Senate, of which I am a part—wants to do our constitutional role. Give us a call so we can do it. Ignore the very bad advice you are getting from the White House Counsel or whoever is in charge over there.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN EDWARD PRITCHARD

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, the time has come to once again bid farewell to another one of Team Blackburn's esteemed fellows.

Over the past year, we have had the privilege of working with Capt. Edward Pritchard, who came to us from the U.S. Marine Corps to serve as our first Department of Defense fellow.

It was a strange year to be a fellow here in the Senate, but Ed rose to the occasion and impressed us. He impressed every one of us with his work ethic, humor, and his singular commitment to maintaining the strength and integrity of the U.S. military. It has truly been an honor having Ed on our team, and I think I speak for each and every one of us when I say we will miss him.

Captain Pritchard, I thank you for your service to Tennessee and to this great Nation and wish you all the best as you head across the river to the Pentagon to start the next exciting chapter in your already distinguished career.

INFLATION

Madam President, last Friday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released a grim set of numbers that confirmed our worst fears: Inflation is getting worse, and by this month, the American people are in for even more economic pain. Why? Because their paychecks just can't keep up with the skyrocketing prices. On top of everything else, they get to look forward to a pay cut every month for the foreseeable future, and all this is happening just in time for Christmas. It is insult added to injury.

Now, it would be bad enough if this economic nosedive would have happened no matter what the White House had chosen to do, but it would not have happened. It was totally preventable. No, this is the direct result of the Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree that started in March and has lasted all year long.

American families struggled to stretch their budgets through 6.8 percent inflation in November—that was in November—which is the highest we have seen in almost 40 years. We are looking at the largest 12-month increase since 1982.

Think about this: All of this happened just as the experts predicted and just as Tennesseans kept saying they feared this was what would happen.

Now, despite a mountain of evidence proving their recovery strategy has failed, Democrats are ready to lean into the past year's insanity and pump not millions, not billions, but trillions—trillions—of dollars into the economy that they have already destroyed. What is worse is they are trying to leverage this economic pain against their Republican colleagues by refusing to raise the debt ceiling to accommodate their own reckless spending.

You can't make this stuff up. This is Biden economics, it is intentional, and it is painful because what the Democrats are doing is showing they are willing to spend taxpayer money on things that taxpayers don't want, which is this destructive economic agenda.

So I ask my Democratic colleagues: What is it about these numbers that are staring you in the face that you do not understand? Are you so eager to force President Biden's "Build Back Broke" agenda on the American people that you are willing to throw reason and accountability and basic economics out the window? Is it really worth watching your fellow countrymen suffer? Is it worth watching people whom you represent, people who elected you, suffer?

If you all bothered to pay attention, what you would see is just how bad it has gotten out here in the real world. The policies that you are so convinced will lead us into a socialist utopia, as some on the left like to say, have dragged the people into a constant—constant—state of fear and worry.

One Tennessee mom told me last week:

Marsha, this stuff scares me. It just scares me.

RUSSIA

Now, Madam President, this not only makes for an extremely discontented group of people, it makes us vulnerable as a nation. The new "axis of evil," as I like to call them, is watching. Communist China, Iran, and North Korea are all watching the chaos here in Washington play out with great interest, and, if the past few weeks have taught us anything, so is their counterpart in the "axis of evil"—Russia.

On Sunday, we saw a flood of so-called strong signals coming from the G7 following a meeting to discuss Russia's aggression toward Ukraine. Now, I don't discount the importance of these statements—I do hope Vladimir Putin heard us loud and clear—but I also know that statements mean nothing unless they come from a position of strength and unless they are accompanied by action, and right now, that is not what the Biden administration is projecting or doing.

President Biden's refusal to lead by example is putting us in danger, and it is putting our partners in Kiev in danger. His administration has spent the

past year throwing policy spaghetti against the wall, trying to get something to stick. The American people, of course, aren't interested in what he has to offer. Nevertheless, he persists, pivoting when he needs to recapture the mainstream media's attention.

Meanwhile, over in Russia, Putin is enjoying every single minute of this. He is probably laughing. He knows he can be as belligerent as he pleases because his most powerful and lethal adversary is totally distracted.

Today, I sent a letter to the White House, asking them to clarify the spin they have been putting out on our posture concerning Ukraine. Here is the problem I am trying to get to the bottom of.

On December 9, the Associated Press reported on a diplomatic phone call between Biden and the Ukrainian President. During the call, the White House allegedly made it clear that we support Ukrainian sovereignty. That is good. However, that report also revealed a supposed plan, concocted by the White House, to persuade Ukraine to cede territory—cede their territory—to Russia because it is currently controlled by Russian separatists. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki has denied the latter. I still have some questions about what is going on behind the scenes.

History tells us that autocrats and thugs like Putin find their greatest power in the weaknesses of their adversaries. That is right. When they see weakness, they pounce. Strength is the only thing that deters them.

Have my colleagues across the aisle ever heard of "peace through strength"? Have they looked at that as a policy?

President Biden must summon the strength to stop playing political games for the cameras and confront this direct challenge to Ukraine's sovereignty. My Democratic colleagues must join him. This will require more than strong words. It does require action.

This year's yet-to-be-passed NDAA authorizes \$75 million in lethal assistance to Ukraine. It is time to pass this bill.

And I would add, that the fiscal year 2022 NDAA is the most bipartisan thing that has come out of the Senate all year.

It is a no-brainer. Let's get this done and not just for Ukraine, but also the future of Western Europe. That is also at stake.

The Biden administration must stand firm and reimpose meaningful sanctions on Nord Stream 2. This one pipeline will double the total capacity of Russian gas exports and hand even more economic leverage to the Kremlin. Why would we want to do that? Ukraine, on the other hand, will lose an estimated \$3 billion each year in transit fees.

Putin is weaponizing energy in Europe. Our partners in Ukraine are living under the constant threat of invasion, and the Biden administration is just sitting there and letting it happen.

So here we are, at the eleventh hour, Christmas is coming, and we are still waiting for Biden and the Democrats to do the job the American people elected them to do.

They have squandered an entire year trying to conjure up support for their disastrous socialist agenda. We are never going to get this time back, and the American people who are suffering are not going to get this year back.

But now is not the moment to just let things go. We can't afford weakness and spin, not when it comes to the economy, not when it comes to foreign policy, and certainly not when it comes to proving to the American people that there is someone in Washington watching out for them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes, Senator TUBERVILLE for up to 10 minutes, and Senator PADILLA for up to 10 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

TORNADO

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I come to the floor this afternoon to talk about my friend Bob Dole, who was laid to rest last week. Before I do that, I want to just take a moment to express our heartfelt thoughts and sorrow at the loss of so many lives in more than a half dozen States, including Kentucky, where my sister and her family live; including Arkansas, where other friends live.

We just want the folks to know who are going through a really tough time and tough patch, that when we talk a lot about you are in our thoughts and our prayers, that you literally are, and it is not just words that we are saying. We hope and promise we will be there to help you going forward as you deal with all of this.

REMEMBERING ROBERT J. DOLE

Madam President, having said that, I just want to talk a bit about Bob Dole, as our Nation continues to mourn his loss and celebrate the life of one of the greatest of the "greatest generation." I rise today to add to the countless tributes benefiting the late, great Senator from Kansas, Bob Dole.

Born Robert Joseph Dole on July 22, 1922, in Russell, KS, Bob Dole grew up during a period known as the Dust Bowl in the American heartland, where his family, like so many others, struggled to pay rent and put food on their table.

Bob Dole was the star athlete in high school who wanted to pursue a career in medicine. He began his studies at the University of Kansas, but like many young Americans at the time, including my dad and uncles from West Virginia, like them, his plans were interrupted by the attack on Pearl Har-

bor and Hitler's army marching across Europe.

Bob Dole enlisted in the Army Reserve and was called up to Active Duty in 1943. Two years later, at the age of 21, as part of the 10th Mountain Division, Bob Dole was severely injured on the battlefield in Italy after bravely pulling a fellow soldier to safety. He sustained grave injuries to his spine, to his shoulder, to one of his hands, and by all accounts was left for dead on the battlefield. But Bob Dole, like the United States and our allies, didn't give up. He persevered.

Despite long odds of recovery, Bob never gave up and wouldn't take no for an answer. He spent 39 months—let me repeat that. He spent 39 months recovering in a hospital bed undergoing numerous surgeries. When doctors told him that he was partially paralyzed, he built a device—he built a device—to help him regain his strength and was able not only to stand upright but eventually to walk again and to run for office many, many times.

Bob Dole knew he was lucky to make it home. And the decades he spent in public service after sustaining his injuries, he dedicated much of his life to ensuring that our veterans, especially our fallen veterans during World War II, like my Uncle Bob, were honored and remembered for their sacrifices.

My Uncle Bob was my mom's youngest brother, one of those sailors who wasn't lucky enough to make it home. He died at the age of 19 in 1944 during a kamikaze attack in the Western Pacific on his aircraft carrier, the USS Suwannee. His body was never recovered. But his memory lives on, thanks in no small part to Senator Bob Dole's work to establish the World War II Memorial on the National Mall. And for that, my family, the Patton family on my mother's side, are forever grateful.

Though they never met, Bob Dole, like so many Americans of the "greatest generation," understood that my Uncle Bob made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our Nation and for the preservation of our democracy. That is why Senator Bob Dole spent so much of his time raising money for the World War II Memorial and why he spent so many Saturdays there, greeting veterans and thanking them for their service. This meant the world to those families, like mine, who lost a loved one during the war.

When Bob Dole was finally able to stand on his own two feet again, the town of Russell, KS, rallied around him and encouraged him to run for office. And he did.

After a short stint in local Kansas politics, Bob served in the U.S. House of Representatives for four terms before being elected to the Senate in 1968, the same year I was commissioned an ensign in the Navy.

For 35 years, Bob Dole proudly served the people of Kansas in Washington—here. His time in Congress, especially as a Senator, is really where his legacy and public service started to take